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TALKING POINTS
SOVIET VIEW OF US ELECTION

The Soviets have signalled, in an unusually blatant way, their intent to play upon the November presidential race.



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Soviet public propaganda has avoided too obvious a preference for the Democrats although it leaves the clear impression that Moscow would rather deal with a new administration, even though uncertain about its actual policies, than carry on with the present one.

None of this should be taken as absolutely ruling out any Soviet willingness to bargain with the Administration even before November.

Precisely because the Soviets want to exploit election pressures on the Administration if possible, there is still a chance of space weapons talks this fall, a small chance but not zero. It depends on the concessions the Administration may be willing to make, especially on an ASAT test moratorium and precommitment to a "comprehensive ban on space weapons" -- which would, in effect, grant the Soviets all their objectives a priori.

Moreover, all-round inflexibility before November won't stop the Soviets from shifting tactics afterwards if they choose to.

The performances are probably intended to put pressure on the Administration itself in the pre-election period.

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The Soviets probably realize that public partisanship would be counterproductive -- although they may be less restrained as the campaign goes on.

But they also probably believe that somewhat less visible signals of their intense displeasure with President Reagan could push his political advisors to press for more concessions, particularly on the space weapons agenda.

They may figure, further, that if these pressures backfire and make the Administration less flexible, they can publicize this and hope for a beneficial effect in November.

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